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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0014
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0098
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SUBJECT: WOMEN IN INDIA: UZBEK SEX WORKERS IN MUMBAI

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¶1. (U) Summary: In February, Congenoffs met with two Russian-speaking women from Uzbekistan who had been detained by the police for prostitution and brought to a local shelter. The two women said they came to India to make money to pay for family medical expenses in Uzbekistan. One admitted to being a sex worker. They indicated unnamed "friends" helped them come to India to work, but were evasive about any more details. Separately, according to media reports, on February 8, New Delhi police arrested the alleged leader of a Central Asian trafficking ring. With law enforcement pressure on red light districts in Mumbai, prostitution has become more diffuse, now seen more in the form of street walkers. The booming Indian economy in the recent past has attracted sex workers from the former Soviet Union. While there is only circumstantial evidence that these women may have been trafficked, they may be part of a wider network of trafficked women from Central Asia to India. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In late January, Prithi Patkar of Prerana, an NGO that runs a nighttime shelter and school for children of sex workers, requested assistance from the Consulate in interviewing two women from Uzbekistan who had been detained in a prostitution raid in Mumbai. Patkar said that one woman had been previously deported from India and returned to Uzbekistan, but had been picked up again. (Note: Prostitution itself is not illegal in India, but organized crime benefiting from the efforts of sex workers is a crime, thus the woman was being held at a shelter and not a jail. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) On February 2, PolOff and a Russian-speaking ConOff visited the shelter in Chembur, an eastern suburb of Mumbai and met with Aleena Ziglata, 21, and Diloram Khudarganova, 29. Neither woman spoke much English, but they were able to communicate in Russian. Aleena acknowledged she was a sex worker who got caught with a client. She said she had no husband or children, and that she needed to make money to pay for medical care for her mother who was in a coma in a hospital in Uzbekistan. Aleena told Congenoffs that she was trained as a

hairstylist in Uzbekistan, but was not able to make money at that profession. Aleena said she had worked as a prostitute in China for a year and made good money. A "friend," who advised her she could make good money as a sex worker in India, helped her come to India. She explained that another "friend" in India paid for her plane ticket from Uzbekistan; this friend used different names and she claimed she could not recall the friend's real name. According to her, she had only been in India for five days and was caught by the police on her first encounter with a client. She was very surprised to learn from other girls at the shelter that they made only 100 Rupees (\$2 USD) for a sexual encounter with a client.

14. (SBU) Aleena asked Congenoffs not to contact her family in Uzbekistan, nor the Uzbek Embassy in New Delhi. She said she feared that officials at the Embassy would demand payment to stop them from telling her family about her situation. She started to cry at the thought of never being able to face her family again after what she has been doing. At the time of this meeting, Aleena had not yet been presented in court and no travel documents were available for review.

15. (SBU) The second woman, Diloram, presented conflicting accounts of her journey to Mumbai. Diloram first claimed to Congenoffs that she had visited India as a tourist last summer, and subsequently left voluntarily. According to the court file which the social worker shared with Congenoffs, Diloram came to India first in June 2008 on a three-month tourist visa, but was deported by a court order when she was picked up in a prostitution raid in August 2008. When asked about the court file from her prior "arrest," she admitted that last August a

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police officer accompanied her from Mumbai to the flight leaving for Tashkent from New Delhi. She said she was granted another tourist visa for India in September, but waited until December to make the trip. (Note: The prior visa had not been cancelled or marked "revoked." End Note.) Initially, Diloram said a "friend" named Laila in New Delhi paid for her flights here both times, but later said she came to Mumbai to see a boyfriend. When asked for information to contact the boyfriend, she said he had since died. She eventually provided the telephone number for the "friend" in New Delhi which was provided to the social worker.

16. (SBU) Throughout the meeting, Diloram maintained that she was not a sex worker. She said that she was just walking along the sidewalk in Bandra (an upscale northern suburb of Mumbai) when she was picked up by the police. The court-appointed social worker told Congenoffs that the charge against Diloram was based on the testimony of a man who claimed to have been a client, but she had been detained by police before any sexual acts had occurred. She said the court assigned her an attorney, but the attorney could not speak Russian and she could not communicate with him.

17. (SBU) Diloram told Congenoffs that her five-year-old daughter is sick, and she needed money to pay for her care. She said she had three years of training as a nurses' aide, but could not make money in Uzbekistan. She said her daughter is living with her parents as her husband died from a drug overdose. Diloram did not want her parents notified that she was safe and in Mumbai; she said she had told her parents she was leaving to tour around Uzbekistan for a little while and did not want them to know what has happened to her here. As with Aleena, she did not want Congenoffs to notify the Uzbek embassy for fear of blackmail or embarrassment if her family were told.

¶8. (SBU) PolOff contacted the American Embassy in Tashkent which provided information regarding shelters for rehabilitating sex workers in Uzbekistan. Separately, the anti-trafficking NGO International Justice Mission was asked by the court to identify rehabilitation facilities or programs in Uzbekistan. Before this information could be passed to the two women, a Mumbai court released the two women from judicial custody. According to Prerana, the court complied with their wish not to be deported or escorted back to Uzbekistan, and it is not known where these women have gone. India has very limited resources for rehabilitating sex workers; with limited English language skill, these women could not avail themselves of even psychological counseling that might be available had they stayed in the local rehabilitation system. Embassy Tashkent advises that the Government of Uzbekistan has opened a state-run shelter for women and has been cooperative on trafficking issues, and believes GOU would try to assist these women or any others who want to return home.

Trafficking Ring Leader Arrested

¶9. (U) Media reports indicate that on February 8, police in New Delhi arrested an Uzbek national who is alleged to be the leader of a human trafficking ring. Police said the leader of the ring, 32-year-old Intizar Imomova, alias Laila, lured women from Russia and Central Asian countries by making promises of lucrative employment here, but upon arrival, confiscated their travel documents and made them work as prostitutes. The reports indicate that the girls were blackmailed into complying as prostitutes. According to news reports, Imomova is a "serial

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offender under the Immoral Trafficking Act" and had been arrested earlier in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Meeting these two Uzbek women provided a hazy glimpse into the paths and patterns of sex workers coming to India from Central Asia. If their stories are true, they appear to have sought sex work in India for economic reasons, a position Mumbai's police have echoed repeatedly when referring to sex workers from Russia and Central Asia, which are the most obvious contingent of foreign sex workers. Whether or not they are part of a larger trafficking ring is unclear; notably, one mentioned that her contact in New Delhi was "Laila," the alias of the women arrested for trafficking. In addition, both referred to a number of "friends" who aided, or encouraged, their trip to India. However, at least one had possession of her passport, which would not be consistent with the pattern reported of the prostitution ring in New Delhi. The social worker did not report that any of these "friends" had sought their release, the women did not indicate that they were being held in Mumbai against their will, nor did they express fear for their families should they return. Nevertheless, both women refused to divulge detailed information about how they came to India, and wanted nothing to do with Uzbek authorities. End comment.

KAUFFMANEC